Geostat

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Ryuko Matoi is a ne'er-do-well smuggler, and Satsuki Kiryuin is the local station constable. They meet under improbable circumstances and are thrown into events beyond their control.

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Introduction
Chapter 1

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Honnouji Station.

Geostationary orbit above Gliese 581 g.

2258.

Ryuko Matoi finished her bourbon with a last massive gulp, checking the station time on the rusted timepiece mounted above the bar. She sighed, realizing she had at least another hour before the ship was refueled completely. Tapping her boots against the bar absentmindedly, she ordered another drink, feeling the wobble of the blast pistol against her hip, dangling from the belt hung loosely around her waist.

"Well, well. Fancy seeing *you* here, Matoi."

Ryuko started at the husky voice behind her, turning around on the barstool and groaning when she saw who it belonged to.

"Constable Kiryuin! You here to haul me in again?" Ryuko asked the uniformed figure before her, looking her up and down with no small degree of visible surprise.

The constable was an imposing sight. Clad in a finely-pressed uniform of navy blue and white, yellow accents adorned her shoulders where long black hair spilled over her rank and insignia like dark water. Knee-high black leather boots covered the lower part of her shapely legs, and she held a service cap under one arm.

"That depends, Matoi… what are you smuggling this time?" The constable inquired, cocking a large eyebrow and staring down at Ryuko condescendingly with a frown. Ryuko jerked a thumb over her shoulder unceremoniously towards a four-person family seated at a table near a back corner, munching away happily on various food items.

"Believe it or not, it's legal this time. Refugee transport, that family back there. Meet the Mankanshokus." Ryuko said with a sigh. The constable snorted, looking briefly to the family before returning her appraising gaze to the other woman seated at the bar and cocking an eyebrow.

"You've gone soft, Matoi." She said condescendingly, placing her slender hands on her hips and shifting her weight from one foot to the other. Ryuko frowned, saying nothing and turning back to the bar for several moments.

"Sit down, Kiryuin. I'll buy you a drink." Ryuko finally said, begrudgingly looking over her shoulder back at the constable.

"Very well," The constable began, sighing and sitting down at the stool next to Ryuko. "I did just get off my shift."

Ryuko motioned to the bartender, who sauntered over to them while polishing a glass casually.

"What'll ya have, constable?" He asked.

"Manhattan. Neat." She said simply, Ryuko looking over at her with a cocked eyebrow.

A Manhattan was an old Earth drink, seemingly long-forgotten by most people on the station. There were only a select few on the station that still even remembered it, let alone ordered it. Ryuko was one of them, and apparently the constable was another.

"A Manhattan, eh? I'm impressed, Kiryuin. Maybe I can get along with you alright after all." Ryuko drawled, ordering another bourbon when the bartender was done with the constable's drink.

"Don't push your luck, Matoi. I'm not one to look a gift horse in the mouth, is all." The constable retorted, sipping her drink in a manner dignified enough to suit her.

"Oh, I'm a horse now? Sure, throw me in jail, but don't insult me Kiryuin!" Ryuko said, hamming it up a bit and trying to break the tension. She might've run into the woman who'd put her in jail more times than anyone else, but that didn't mean she couldn't enjoy it.

Ryuko was rewarded with a small chuckle from the constable, shaking her head before continuing to sip the Manhattan slowly. They exchanged a few more barbs until Ryuko felt as if the atmosphere had significantly lightened between them, helped by the alcohol just a bit. After a while, Ryuko cocked her head to the side and stared at the constable for a little longer than what should have been appropriate.

"Y'know, Kiryuin. I don't think you've ever told me your first name." She said seriously, staring back down into the empty glass at the ice cubes melting there.

"That's been on purpose, Matoi." The constable muttered, swilling the remains of her drink.

"Fine, fine." Ryuko said, slamming her glass down the bar and sliding it in the direction of the bartender haphazardly. They sat there for several minutes in silence, Ryuko counting down the minutes until they could be back on the ship and underway.

"Satsuki."

"What?" Ryuko said, confused.

"I said, Satsuki. My name is Satsuki." The constable said quietly. Ryuko smiled, a bloom of warmth blossoming in her chest before she smacked it back down, grimacing. She managed a smile, extending a hand towards Satsuki in a gesture of friendship that was shaky at the absolute best.

"Well, nice to meet you, Satsuki. I'm Ryuko." Ryuko said. Satsuki warily showed a small smile, taking the smuggler's hand and firmly

clamping it in her own, shaking and making Ryuko grimace with the force of the gesture.

"I know that-" Satsuki began, before being cut off by a sharp impact followed by a massive rumbling coming from some far-off part of the station. Dust shook from the ceiling and coated everyone and everything in the small bar with a fine layer of grit. Satsuki's communicator chimed on her wrist, holding it up to her mouth as she spoke and listened.

"This is Kiryuin, go ahead." Satsuki said.

"… rebels!… attacking the station… too many… overrun…" Satsuki's radio sputtered before dying completely. She looked up, and Ryuko was frightened by what she saw there momentarily. It was something she had never seen in the constable's beautiful blue eyes before. They both knew the reputation that the rebels had for being exceptionally brutal. That momentary flash Ryuko saw in Satsuki's eyes was fear.

But it was only there for a second, replaced by something Ryuko was all too familiar with: resolve.

"Ah, shit." Ryuko said, standing from her barstool and drawing her blast pistol.

"Alright, Mankanshokus! We're rolling out, rebels are attacking and we gotta get outta here fast!" Ryuko said, preparing to make her way out of the bar into the station proper.

Satsuki blocked her way.

"Ryuko. I'll help you get these people out of here, you'll have a much better chance with me at your side." Satsuki said, drawing her own blast pistol and arming it with a high-pitched whine.

"Right. Lead the way." Ryuko said, taking special note that Satsuki had addressed her using her first name.

A massive explosion rocked the blast door at the end of the hallway they were in, smoke and sparks billowing out of the now-gaping opening the blast had created. Blast shots began raining down at them from the direction of the fire and brimstone.

"This way!" Satsuki hollered over the din, motioning down a side gantryway while firing shots back at the unseen invaders.

They ran for several minutes, directed by Satsuki and her expert knowledge of the station. As soon as they were free from death and noise, Ryuko held her wrist communicator up to her mouth.

"Senketsu!" She implored urgently, trying to contact her ship's artificial intelligence.

"Yes, Ryuko." The deep artificial voice of the AI said back to her via the communicator.

"The station's under attack by rebels. I need the ship spooled up in fifteen, and activate the point defense system. Make sure you keep them out of the dock while we try to make it to you." Ryuko huffed, the constant running taking its toll.

"It will be done." Senketsu responded stoically, Ryuko cutting the communication link.

Ryuko felt a hard tug on the back of her jacket, wrenched backwards by Satsuki right before she blindly ran into the line of fire of at least twenty rebels past the opening of the gantryway.

"Thanks." Ryuko said, bending over and placing her hands on her knees, huffing as quietly as possible.

"There's at least twenty of them out there, and the dock is still three hallways away. This is the last major chokepoint…" Satsuki trailed off, calling up schematics for the station and examining them closely.

"I will remain here and distract them, you must take these people to safety at all costs. Prepare yourself." Satsuki said, reaching up and typing a code into a panel set near the edge of the door. The sides swung open, revealing a large blast rifle stored for emergency situations like these. Holstering her pistol, Satsuki primed the rifle, feeling the comfortable vibrations of the powerup sequence against her palms.

"What? No way, we're getting you outta here too-" Ryuko began.

"Don't be stupid, Ryuko. There's no way we'll all make it if someone can't pull them off of you. It's the only way." Satsuki said, the ice in stone set in her eyes turning Ryuko's soul to mush.

"But… how will you get off the station?" Ryuko asked, clenching her teeth so as not to scream.

"I'll find another way. My duties as constable are not yet done here." Satsuki said, motioning to the family behind them to prepare to make a break for it.

Ryuko set her jaw, placing a hand on Satsuki's shoulder firmly.

"Take care of yourself, Satsuki." Ryuko said calmly. Satsuki's eyes widened, before actually flashing Ryuko a small smile.

"Do the same yourself, Ryuko. Now GO!" She screamed.

As Ryuko burst from cover followed quickly by the Mankanshokus, Satsuki rounded the corner, wielding the powerful blast rifle on full automatic, spraying the targets downrange with bolts. Screams and noise filled the air as they ran, leaving the chaos far behind in their flight for the ship.

"Senketsu! What's our status?" Ryuko hollered into her communicator, steps away from the dock.

"Minor resistance, but nothing I couldn't handle. The ship is fully prepared for departure, Ryuko."

Ryuko smiled at her AI's words, her faith in her mechanized companion well-placed. Smoking bodies, still fresh from the battle that had ensued within the dock, littered the floor as they entered the ship.

If the battle inside was raging, then the battle in the space surrounding the station was ten times worse. Heavy rounds from ships both miltary and rebel flew every which way as Ryuko maneuvered the small ship between vessels ten times its size.

"Senketsu, give me full power to engines and shields. We need to haul ass outta here." Ryuko said, grimacing with the G forces of the reckless turns she was performing.

"Yes, Ryuko." Senketsu said over the bridge speakers as he calculated a route for their escape.

Soon they were out of the main battle and into open space, Senketsu spooling up the ship's drives for a jump out of the system. Ryuko could finally sink into the bridge chair, if only for a second.

"Ryuko, I've got a communication request coming through from the station." Senketsu announced.

"Put it on my screen." Ryuko said, sitting up in her chair and leaning over a small monitor set into the command console before her. A shaky image appeared, filled with static before it resolved into Satsuki's face. She was coughing and her breath was rattling, one side of her face covered in blood from a gash above her eye. She looked like hell.

"M-Matoi…" She managed between coughs.

"Kiryuin! What happened?!" Ryuko implored desperately, her heart rate rising at the sight. Seeing someone so dignified and stoic

reduced to a coughing wreck was unnerving to say the least.

"They overran us… I don't have much time left… things I need to say…" Satsuki wheezed, clutching a gaping wound in her side. Ryuko inhaled sharply.

"Shit, you need medical attention. Senketsu, turn the ship around. Prepare to head back-"

"No!" Satsuki screamed before erupting into another fit of coughs, making Ryuko cover her mouth and turn her head from the screen.

"No, li-listen to me Matoi… they've set an ion bomb on the station. It'll go off in… minutes… there's no time. Are the civilians safe? Are you safe?" Satsuki implored, staring deep into Ryuko's eyes once she had returned her attention to the screen. Ryuko laid one hand gently to the side of the screen to steady herself.

"Yeah…" Ryuko croaked.

"Good, good…" Satsuki said with a small smile.

"Ryuko, I… I must confess something. From the moment I met you… from way back when, the raid on Minmar… you remember…" Satsuki said between coughs, becoming wetter and hackier now.

"Heh… yeah. That began a long history of you throwing me in jail." Ryuko remembered, almost with a certain kind of fondness now. She had been so innocent back then. When she had seen the imposing sight of constable Kiryuin standing over her for the first time, she had sworn she knew the woman from somewhere. Like a memory, far-off and long ago. She had forgotten about that feeling until now.

"From that moment, Ryuko… I always felt like I knew you from somewhere… but I could never put a finger on why…" Satsuki coughed, Ryuko staring at the monitor in disbelief. All this time…

"Satsuki, I… you too…?" Ryuko breathed, not daring to look away from the monitor.

"Good… good… you felt it too…" Satsuki croaked, blood now seeping from the edges of her mouth as they curved upwards slightly.

"Depite our history, I'm-" Satsuki managed before erupting into a massive coughing fit.

"Satsuki!" Ryuko shrieked, nose inches away from the monitor's screen.

"I'm glad I met you… I only wish… more time-"

The monitor cut immediately to static, a bright light filling the bridge from behind them.

"Ryuko… the bomb has detonated. We must leave the system immediately." Senketsu implored softly, Ryuko's head hanging over the monitor, her messy hair dangling in front of her face.

"Do it." She whispered, warm liquid filling her eyes as she clenched her jaw tightly, trying to avoid the inevitable.

The only sound present in the always-silent void in that moment was the sound of Ryuko hitting a panel near the monitor, leaving a fist-sized dent that would remain there forever more.

The stars around them winked out one by one as they jumped from the Gliese system for the last time.